

BASIC BATTLE ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY STUDY GUIDE

Format for Battle Analysis

1. DEFINE THE SUBJECT:

- a. Determine what, where, when, and who to analyze.
- b. Determine research material available to support study.
- c. Evaluate research material.

2. SET THE STAGE:

- a. Consider the strategic factors.
- b. Consider the operational setting.
- c. Review the tactical situation.
 - (1) Study the area of operations.
 - (a) weather.
 - (b) terrain.
 - (2) Compare the opposing forces.
 - (a) size and composition.
 - (b) technology.
 - (c) logistical systems.
 - (d) command, control, and communications.
 - (e) intelligence.
 - (f) doctrine and training.
 - (g) condition and morale.
 - (h) leadership.

3. DESCRIBE THE ACTION:

- a. State the mission of the opposing forces.
- b. Describe the initial disposition of forces.
- c. Describe the opening moves of the battle.
- d. Detail the major phases.
- e. State the outcome.

4. DRAW LESSONS LEARNED:

- a. Relate causes to effects.
- b. Establish military "lessons learned."

Study Guide for Battle Analysis

Overview:

1. General: The U.S. Army Command and General Staff College developed the battle analysis methodology to help its students structure their studies of battles and campaigns. The format can be easily applied by any military professional seeking insight from historical battles and campaigns to help deepen his/her understanding of warfare and the profession of arms
 - a. The battle analysis methodology is a process for systematic study of a battle or campaign.
 - b. This process takes the form of a checklist that ensures completeness in examining the critical aspects of the chosen subject.
2. Format: The checklist is divided into four sections, each of which builds on the previous one(s) to provide a logical order for the study.
 - a. The four sections are:
 - (1) Define the Subject.
 - (2) Set the Stage (strategic, operational, and tactical settings).
 - (3) Describe the Action.
 - (4) Draw Lessons Learned.
 - b. In the first section, you decide what battle you are going to study. In the next two, you gather the information necessary for a thorough and balanced study, and organize it in a logical manner to facilitate analysis. In the last section, you analyze the information to derive “lessons learned.”
3. Purpose: The battle analysis methodology is a guide to help ensure that important aspects of the study of a historical battle or campaign are not forgotten. It is not a rigid checklist that must be followed to the letter. You do not have to use every part of it in your study, but all of the elements of battle analysis should be considered. Do not let the flow of your study be disrupted by the format’s order.

Annotated Battle Analysis Format:

1. DEFINE THE SUBJECT: Just like a military operation, a successful study of military history requires a clear, obtainable objective. The battle analysis format begins with the definition of the study.
 - a. Determine what, where, when, and who: Establish the parameters of the study to keep it manageable by determining the date, location, and principal adversaries.
 - b. Determine the research sources: Once you have chosen a subject, decide what sources you will need to make a systematic and balanced study. Books and articles will make up the majority of your sources, but other media—such as video, audio, and electronic ones—can also contribute to the study.
 - (1) Books: Look for a variety of sources to get a balanced account of the battle. Memoirs, biographies, operational histories, and institutional histories should all be consulted for information on your subject. Do not overlook general histories, which can help provide the strategic setting.

(2) Articles: Articles from professional military publications and historical journals can be excellent sources of information.

(3) Other: Documentaries containing film footage of actual events or interviews with people who took part in a battle can add to your understanding of the events. Transcribed oral history interviews with battle participants may also be available. In addition, check the Internet for electronic documents on more recent military operations.

c. Evaluate the research sources: Finding good sources to support your study is not easy, despite the large volume of published material. As you gather the research material, evaluate each in terms of its content and bias.

(1) Content: Determine what information the source can give you. Is it relevant to your subject? Will it help you complete your study?

(2) Bias: Decide to what extent the author is subjective or objective in his/her work. Is there a clear bias? If so, what is it? Does the bias make a difference in your use of the work?

2. SET THE STAGE: This portion of the battle analysis format establishes the setting for the study. You must have a good understanding of the strategic, operational, and tactical situations before you can analyze the battle. The level of detail in this portion of the battle analysis will depend on the purpose of the study and the audience for which it is intended. If the causes of the war and the opponents are well known, there is little reason to go into great detail. Normally, a few paragraphs are enough to give the necessary background to place the battle in context.

a. Consider the strategic factors: What caused the war? Who were the opponents? What were their war aims? What armed forces did the nations possess? How well trained, equipped, and armed were they? Did any social, political, economic, or religious factors influence the armies?

b. Describe the operational setting: What campaign was the battle part of? What were the objectives of the campaign? Did any military factors—alliances, tactics, doctrine, or personality traits—affect the campaign? How did the battle fit into the overall campaign?

c. Review the tactical situation: Since these factors have a direct effect on the operation, this part of the format will often answer why a particular action was or was not taken.

(1) Study the area of operations:

(a) Weather. What was the weather like in the area of operations? How did it affect the operation?

(b) Terrain. Use OCOKA (observation, cover and concealment, obstacles, key terrain, and avenues of approach) factors to describe the terrain in the area of operations. What advantages did it give to the attackers or to the defenders?

(2) Compare the opposing forces: In many ways, this is the heart of the study—analyzing the opposing forces. Describe and analyze the forces involved in the following terms:

(a) Size and composition. What were the principal combat and supporting units involved in the operation? What were their numerical strengths in terms of troops and key weapon systems? How were they organized?

(b) Technology. What were the battlefield technologies, such as tanks, small arms, close support aircraft, etc., of the opposing forces? Did one side have a technological advantage over the other?

(c) Logistical systems. How did logistics affect the battle? Did one side have an advantage in available supplies or transportation?

(d) Command, control, and communications. What kind of C3 systems did the opposing forces employ? Were these systems under centralized or decentralized control? How were the staffs organized, and how effective were they?

(e) Intelligence. What intelligence assets were available to the opposing forces? How well were they used? What were the major sources of intelligence? Did one side have an advantage over the other in intelligence resources?

(f) Doctrine and training. What was the tactical doctrine of the opposing forces, and how did they use it? What was the level of training in the opposing forces? Were some troops experienced veterans, some not, and some in between?

(g) Condition and morale. What was the morale of the troops before the fighting, and did it change after the fighting began? How long had the troops been committed, and how did weather and terrain affect them? Did specific leaders affect morale?

(h) Leadership. Who were the leaders, and how effective had they been in past actions? How were they trained, and what was their level of experience?

3. **DESCRIBE THE ACTION:** This part of battle analysis—describing the battle itself—is what most people consider to be real military history. By following the format, you will study the battle chronologically. Do not let this approach disrupt your study of the battle. If you need to skip a phase in order to examine a combat functional area—such as maneuver, logistics, etc.—because it is more important to your overall objective, then do so.

a. State the mission of the opposing forces: What were the objectives? What missions were developed to achieve the objectives? Were there other options—such as attacking, defending, or withdrawing—open to the two sides? Were those options feasible?

b. Describe the initial disposition of forces: What were the locations of the units of the opposing forces? How were the units deployed tactically?

c. Describe the opening moves of the battle: Examine the initial actions by the opposing forces. Did one side gain an advantage over the other in the opening phase of the battle?

d. Detail the major phases: Establish a chronology for the battle while examining the actions after the opening moves. Look for key events or decisions that turned the battle toward one side or the other.

e. State the outcome: Who won the battle? Did either side achieve its objectives? Did the battle provide an advantage to the winning side, and what was it? Did the battle have any long term effects, and what were they?

4. **DRAW LESSONS LEARNED:** This is the most important step of the battle analysis process. With this step, you are turning “combat information” in the form of the historical facts of the battle into finished analysis rendered as “lessons learned.”

a. Relate causes to effects: In trying to distill “lessons” from the study of any battle, it is important to look at why something happened. To do so you will look at the outcome and what caused it. Look for those essential elements of the victory or defeat.

b. Establish military “lessons learned”: Lessons from the past that are still relevant today are the end product of the battle analysis process. The insights, or “constants of war,” gained from the study should transcend time, place, and doctrine. You can use one of the following frameworks (or another) for focusing analysis of military operations to help find these “constants.” These frameworks are defined in FM 100-5, Operations.

(1) Principles of War.

(2) Tenets of Airland Operations.

(3) Battlefield Operating Systems.